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Press Release

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Proper use of outdoor cooking items key to fire safety

Installation Management Command-Europe public affairs

HEIDELBERG, Germany – Traditionally, outdoor cooking is viewed as a summertime activity. But for the ardent cooks, cookouts are pretty much a year-around activity.

No matter when you fire up those charcoals or use the propane grill, safety is a must at all times, according to Gerald Adams, Installation Management Command-Europe fire protection specialist.

“The proper use and storage of barbeque grills is essential to safe outdoor cooking,” said Adams. “Data shows that there are hundreds of fires that occur each year related to outdoor cooking, and almost all of those are preventable.”

According to Adams, individuals in Europe have a “very good” safety record regarding the use of outdoor cooking grills. However, he added that people still need to be vigilant because all it takes is one mistake or one bad decision to cause an outdoor cooking-related fire incident.

Some fire incidents he has heard about, he said, are clearly bad decisions.

“People have placed charcoal in ovens. Others have used charcoal grills indoors. These are deadly ideas,” he said.

As part of IMCOM-Europe’s effort to raise awareness of fire safety during the Army’s focus on fire prevention now through October, Adams offered a number of tips for outdoor cooking:

Before Cooking

- Instruct children on the dangers of a lit grill.
- Choose a safe grilling location away from children’s play areas and areas of heavy traffic. The area should be well-ventilated to avoid danger from carbon monoxide and other combustion by-products.
- Never grill inside or even in a semi-enclosed area, such as a tent or camper. Always grill on a flat, non-combustible surface.
- Make sure you’re not wearing clothing that could contact the fire, such as hanging shirt-tails or dangling strings.
- Never leave a grill unattended.

Cooking With Propane (LP) Gas Grills

- Read the owner's manual and operating instructions carefully.
- Use the exact type of tank and fuel specified. Do not attempt to connect European-type propane cylinders with U.S. LP grill supply lines.
- Check hoses and valve connections often. Do this by pouring soapy water on the connection points. If bubbles appear, retighten the connections and test again. Also, if repairs to gas lines are needed, ensure qualified repair personnel fix the lines.
- Transfer and store liquid propane cylinders in an upright position and never where temperatures can reach 125 degrees.
- Whether your grill lights by match or push button igniter, always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Cooking With Charcoal Grills

- Charcoal grills should be lit and supervised by adults only
- Never start a fire with gasoline.
- Use starter fluid only as recommended by the manufacturer. Never use starter fluid once the fire has been ignited.
- If using an electric fire starter, use an insulated indoor/outdoor cord plugged into an outlet protected by a ground fault circuit interrupter if equipped.
- Be sure the ground is dry and you're not standing in water when plugging the starter into an outlet.
- Don't use a charcoal grill underneath a combustible overhead.

So, bring out the hot dogs and the hamburgers, get out the grill, and remember the safety tips mentioned above. Enjoy your outdoor meals and have a safe fun summer.

Individuals with questions should contact local garrison fire prevention offices.

More information is available on the IMCOM-Europe's Website:

http://www.imcom-europe.army.mil/sites/management/docs/spring_safety.pdf